

Appendix A - Situation Statements

Introduction

Appendix A briefly describes the steps to identify and utilize “situation statements” (Significant Issues) in the revision process. Situation statements were developed from public comments and used throughout the development of alternatives. There is a direct tie from the public comments received in 1997 to the range of eight alternatives approved in 2000.

Processes used for public information sharing, participation and involvement

The key to understanding the identification and use of situations is the implementation of public involvement. The following are some of the methods used for public involvement:

Revision Newsletters

Newsletters were mailed at key points during the process and were used to keep the public and employees informed on revision progress. The newsletters provided information on revision schedules, public participation opportunities, situation identification, and alternative development. Opportunities were also provided for the public to write opinion sections on topics of interest. The mailing list grew to over 2,000 organizations and individuals and became a particularly good method for informing local and national publics.

Interdisciplinary Team Meetings Open to the Public

Early in the revision process the Interdisciplinary team meetings were opened to the public. Open meetings provided an opportunity for timely input from the public at all stages of the planning process. It also gave the public a chance to hear the planning team’s dialogue and rationale on all revision phases. The open meetings were very successful, therefore the Forest Supervisor also opened his staff meetings to the public. This allowed the public to hear the Forest Supervisor’s dialogue and decisions on various revision topics. Open meetings increased communication between the public and the Forest Service and served to minimize surprises in the revision process.

Revision Website

The website enabled people to review revision schedules, IDT meeting dates and download draft revision documents and maps. Based on feedback from the public a “Current Events” section was constructed. This site provided information on current decisions, processes, and upcoming events.

Telephone Recordings

Interdisciplinary team meetings were announced on a telephone recording. Members of the public could access the recording and determine dates, times, and locations of revision meetings.

Collaborative Learning Workshops

At key steps in the process, collaborative learning workshops were held in communities in Southcentral Alaska. They were designed for the public to visit with their neighbors and Forest Service personnel and to gain information and develop revision products. Collaborative learning workshops were held in the following communities: Whittier, Hope, Seward, Cordova, Valdez, Girdwood, Cooper Landing, Kenai, Chenega, Tatitlek, Eyak, and Anchorage.

Situations Identification

The formal comment period for the Forest Plan revision began on April 21, 1997, with the publishing of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register. Prior to that time the Interdisciplinary team identified preliminary revision topics. These topics were reviewed in nine collaborative learning workshops in Southcentral Alaskan communities. The topics were also sent to all persons on the revision mailing list. On December 31, 1997, the formal comment period closed.

The Interdisciplinary Team received approximately 3,000 comments during the scoping period. All comments were reviewed individually at least twice and classified into one of eighty categories. Reports were produced displaying all comments for a particular category (e.g., wildlife, recreation, forest products etc.). The reports were hardcopy bound, stored on compact discs, and placed on the website.

The next step was to review the category reports and determine the interests associated with the comments. Twenty-four primary interests were identified for the Chugach National Forest. These interests are:

- Air Quality
- Soil Productivity
- Water Quality
- Ecological Systems Management
- Habitat for Sustainable Populations of Brown Bears
- Management of Fish and Wildlife Habitat
- Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species
- Natural Resource Products - Forest Products
- Natural Resource Products – Minerals
- Communication Sites and Utility Corridor
- Heritage Resources
- Motorized Access
- Nonmotorized Access
- Natural Quiet
- Recreation Opportunities
- Scenic Quality
- Tourism
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Wilderness Designations
- Employment and Income
- Fire Protection
- Private Property Rights
- Quality of Life and Life Styles
- Subsistence

Situations identify where interests are in conflict or where existing conditions could be improved by changing the 1984 Forest Plan. To determine the situations each of the twenty-four interests were reviewed to determine conflicts and areas of improvement. The following six situations were identified:

1. Ecological Systems Management.
2. Habitat for Fish and Wildlife.
3. Resource Development.
4. Recreation/Tourism.

5. Recommendations for Administrative and Congressional Designations.
6. Subsistence.

After interests and situations were crafted, another round of collaborative learning workshops were held and comments requested from all those on the mailing list. Following this comment period the interests and situation statements were finalized. These situation statements are described in detail in Chapter 1.

Linking Public Comments to Alternative Development

The revision process was developed to provide a direct link from public comments to the development of alternatives. The following seven stages display the linkage:

1. Public comments were classified into eighty categories.
2. The eighty categories were used to develop interests.
3. Interests were reviewed to determine situations.
4. Activities were identified for each interest.
5. Activities were mixed and matched to build management area prescriptions.
6. Standards and guidelines were determined for activities on when, where, or how resource protection measures should apply.
7. Alternatives were constructed to address various situations using management area prescriptions and standards and guidelines.